



Rock Creek Herd Management Area Elko County, Nevada

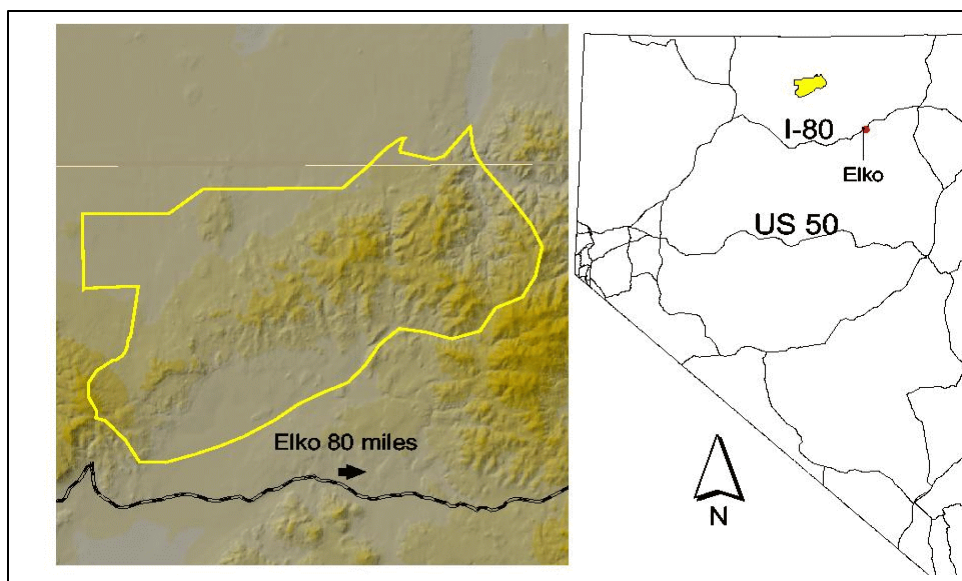


Habitat/Location

The Rock Creek Herd Management Area (HMA) is located approximately 80 miles north of Elko, Nevada. Geology in this area is typical of that found throughout Nevada with north-south trending mountain ranges separated by wide valley bottoms. The highest elevation in the HMA is 7,742 feet in elevation, with the lowest points being found in the valley bottoms that range around 5,600 feet. Average precipitation is approximately 7 inches on the valley bottoms and from 16 to 18 inches on the mountain peaks. Most of this precipitation comes during the winter months in the form of snow when the plants are dormant. This creates the cold-temperate desert of which the Rock Creek HMA is a part. Temperatures can be extreme. They range from a high of near 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer months to a low of 15 degrees below zero in the winter.

Vegetation

The HMA supports vegetation typical of the Great Basin region which consists of shrubs such as sagebrush, rabbitbrush and whitesage and many species of native grasses such as Indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, Sandberg bluegrass and bluebunch wheatgrass. The higher elevations support groves of aspen forests but no pine trees.



Herd Description

The Ellison Ranching Company, which is the holder of the public lands grazing permit in the Rock Creek HMA, historically turned out large draft and work horses. Many of the horses gathered within this area are very large, well conformed and colorful. Many red and blue roan horses are found along with markings such as blazes and stockings.

The majority of wild horses are descendants of domestic ranch, farm and homestead stock. As stated above, there was one large ranch in the area of the Rock Creek HMA that had a domestic horse permit at the time the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act was passed (P.L. 92-195, December 1971). When the Act was passed, the BLM could no longer authorize grazing by domestic horses within wild horse herd areas, and all permittees were given a certain time period to gather their branded and claimed horses. Any horses remaining on the public lands at the end of this claiming period were declared wild. The horses in the Rock Creek HMA are probably a mix of several common breeds.



Horses in Rock Creek HMA during recent gather.